

Got Mayweather/Oscar On The Mind? Baldy Hopes PBF Does Too

Written by Michael Woods

Thursday, 02 November 2006 19:00

Floyd Mayweather likes to say he doesn't overlook anyone, that he never underestimates an opponent. As we look at his record, it's fairly easy to accept this on face value. He's never had weight woes, never huffed and puffed down the home stretch because he thought he'd be able to roll over a less talented foe and thus didn't do his usual pavement pounding. I can't say the same thing as we wait for PBF's Saturday showdown with the late blooming Argentine, Carlos Baldomir, the Comeback Fighter of the Year of 2006 no matter what happens to him on Saturday...because I find myself looking past the 35-year-old Baldomir, to Oscar De La Hoya.

But first things first: I'm tempted to say that Floyd will have his way with Baldy, and box his ears off, and conclusively shove him back not to the middle of the line where he once stood, but certainly into the Cosme Rivera, Demetrius Hopkins, Oscar Diaz zone. I'm in line with Bob Arum on this one, thinking that Baldy caught Zab Judah unaware on Jan. 7, and exploited Super Judah's overconfidence. And I tend to think that PBF softened Arturo Gatti up, like you microwave a frozen stick of butter for easy spreading, on June 25, rendering him that much softer so Baldy could pierce him repeatedly en route to his July TKO win. In other words, maybe, just maybe, we let Baldy's two unexpected wins influence us too much, and are expecting too much from him against Floyd. Part of me, though – my heart, I suppose, I do have one you know – is hoping that Baldomir's improbable ascension will continue. That he will shock and amaze us, on an even grander scale. And then everyone wins because the rematch would be mongo...

Floyd may not be the No. 1 fighter of all-time, as he will tell you. But he is atop everyone's P4P list. And Arum, who had Baldy (and Floyd, for that matter) in his stable, thinks PBF will trample Baldy like one of those poor drunken saps that gets gored in Pamplona every year. Not everyone agrees with the Top Rank titan.

Jim Lampley, of HBO's Dream Announcing Team, thinks Baldy has a shot.

"It's a real fight," he told TSS. "Baldomir walks around at 185 pounds. In his current incarnation, he's unbeaten. There's a possibility that Floyd could hurt his hand in the fight, and he's fighting a no-nonsense guy who hasn't lost in eight years. Baldomir can't be casually dismissed."

I don't dismiss the Argentine, because even if Judah was looking past Baldy at Spinks, and Gatti is post-must-buy-by milk at this point, the confidence Baldomir gained with those wins is immeasurable.

He fancies himself on a different plane now, and that confidence overwhelms the doubts that come with notching only 13 kayos in 58 pro fights.

But even if I don't dismiss Baldy, I do admit to looking past him, and seeing Oscar De La Hoya in the distance.

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An Oscar/PBF fight would be THE FIGHT of 2007, and maybe the newest millennium. Because the press that will be engineered if Floyd Mayweather Sr. is working Oscar's corner against his own son will be immense. That's a spectacle that will force casual fans to pony up to watch.

I'm curious how Mayweather, who hasn't gained the legions of adoring masses he believes he's due, would act during a promotion with the Golden Boy. Oscar would be the severe underdog, making his last stand in a Hall of Fame career, and would be cast as the hero. Floyd, Dreamteamer Larry Merchant says, would adopt the most natural role available to him.

"He'll figure out some kind of role, he knows how to tailor a message for each event," the analyst said. "Against Gatti, Floyd knew he was the good guy, so he took the role of the villain. In another instance, he fought Judah, and couldn't say enough good stuff. He's tuned in to what he has to be for the event he's in."

And that Mayweather family dynamic. It's got elements of The Sopranos, only Tony's bravado is interspersed throughout a handful of the Mayweathers.

The Mayweathers are a complicated web of physical excellence and interpersonal chaos. As Lampley puts it: "They all need a family transplant."

In NYC in September, PBF and Baldy met the press at Tavern on the Green. Before the festivities kicked off, there was PBF, up on the dais.

He took his name card, and took out a pen.

He blacked out the "Jr." and replaced the card.

No longer does he want to be known as Floyd Mayweather Jr.

He's tired of the squabbles with his pop, who he thinks is too envious of his success, and tries to take too much credit for his son's success.

"I'm not a junior," PBF told me last month. "I have a middle name and he doesn't have a middle name."

Senior retired in 1990 with a 30-6-1 mark and Junior thinks his dad is a bit miffed because his son has surpassed him in stature.

"His career never went nowhere," PBF told me.

And while the scene would be enticing in an Enquirer sort of way, you have to hope, if you aren't the sort that admits to watching NASCAR for the wrecks, that we see a reconciliation between the two. But at this point, that prospect seems unlikely.

"He's my son and the tensions are there," Senior told me on the phone not long ago. "And if Floyd fights Oscar, well, my son makes his living boxing, and I make my living training now. I'm

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going to do what I have to do.”

The name-change subject is understandably touchy for the father.

“He has the same name as me on his birth certificate,” Senior said. “It’s too bad he doesn’t want to carry his father’s name. Who the f--- would know him if he didn’t have that name?”

By the way, Senior’s middle name, he says, is “Joy,” and that’s a post-birth certificate addition.

A girlfriend called him “Joy,” after the Supremes 1972 album, “Floy Joy,” he explained to me.

And while he states that the name game doesn’t bother him all that much, Senior isn’t enthused at the development.

“He don’t have to be Floyd at all,” he said. “So change your name what you want it to be.”

But I digress, don’t I?

And I’m getting ahead of myself. After Baldy, there is a Feb. 24 HBO PPV date set aside with Floyd’s name on it, and a fight with Oscar wouldn’t happen before May.

Now, no disrespect to Baldomir.

I hope he continues his streak as the all-time late bloomer, and the Pretty Risky fight is a closely contested battle.

But it’s getting nippy out, and there are Xmas decorations in the department stores, and I can’t help but glance at the horizon, and wonder what’s in store for all of us in 2007.

Carlos Baldomir has to hope that this one time, Floyd Mayweather’s mind is drifting in the same manner.

But I think that’s Pretty Unlikely.